We Claim:

1. A monoclonal antibody that specifically binds human ghrelin at an epitope localized to amino acids 4-20 of human ghrelin.

2. The antibody of Claim 1, wherein the ghrelin is acylated or unacylated.

3. A monoclonal antibody that specifically binds a peptide comprising amino acids 4-20 of human ghrelin.

4. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3 comprising at least one peptide selected from peptides with a sequence selected from the group consisting of:
   a) SEQ ID NO: 5, 6, 7, 20, 22 or 28 located at CDR1 of the light chain variable region (LCVR);
   b) SEQ ID NO: 8 located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
   c) SEQ ID NO: 9, 21, 23 or 29 located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
   d) SEQ ID NO: 14, 15, 16 or 24 located at CDR1 of the heavy chain variable region (HCVR);
   e) SEQ ID NO: 17, 25 or 26 located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
   f) SEQ ID NO: 18 or 27 located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

5. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3 comprising at least two peptides selected from peptides with a sequence selected from the group consisting of:
   a) SEQ ID NO: 5, 6, 7, 20, 22 or 28 located at CDR1 of the light chain variable region (LCVR);
   b) SEQ ID NO: 8 located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
   c) SEQ ID NO: 9, 21, 23 or 29 located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
   d) SEQ ID NO: 14, 15, 16 or 24 located at CDR1 of the heavy chain variable region (HCVR);
   e) SEQ ID NO: 17, 25 or 26 located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
   f) SEQ ID NO: 18 or 27 located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

6. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3 comprising at least three peptides selected from peptides with a sequence selected from the group consisting of:
    a) SEQ ID NO: 5, 6, 7, 20, 22 or 28 located at CDR1 of the light chain variable region (LCVR);
    b) SEQ ID NO: 8 located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
    c) SEQ ID NO: 9, 21, 23 or 29 located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
    d) SEQ ID NO: 14, 15, 16 or 24 located at CDR1 of the heavy chain variable region (HCVR);
    e) SEQ ID NO: 17, 25 or 26 located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
    f) SEQ ID NO: 18 or 27 located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

7. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3 comprising at least four peptides selected from peptides with a sequence selected from the group consisting of:
    a) SEQ ID NO: 5, 6, 7, 20, 22 or 28 located at CDR1 of the light chain variable region (LCVR);
    b) SEQ ID NO: 8 located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
    c) SEQ ID NO: 9, 21, 23 or 29 located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
    d) SEQ ID NO: 14, 15, 16 or 24 located at CDR1 of the heavy chain variable region (HCVR);
    e) SEQ ID NO: 17, 25 or 26 located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
    f) SEQ ID NO: 18 or 27 located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

8. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3 comprising at least five peptides selected from peptides with a sequence selected from the group consisting of:
    a) SEQ ID NO: 5, 6, 7, 20, 22 or 28 located at CDR1 of the light chain variable region (LCVR);
    b) SEQ ID NO: 8 located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
    c) SEQ ID NO: 9, 21, 23 or 29 located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
    d) SEQ ID NO: 14, 15, 16 or 24 located at CDR1 of the heavy chain variable region (HCVR);
    e) SEQ ID NO: 17, 25 or 26 located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
    f) SEQ ID NO: 18 or 27 located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

9. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3, comprising peptides with the sequence shown in:
SEQ ID NO: 5, located at CDR1 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 8, located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 9, located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 14, located at CDR1 of the HCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 17, located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
SEQ ID NO: 18, located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

10. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3, comprising peptides with the sequence shown in:
SEQ ID NO: 6, located at CDR1 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 8, located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 9, located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 15, located at CDR1 of the HCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 17, located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
SEQ ID NO: 18, located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

11. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3, comprising peptides with the sequence shown in:
SEQ ID NO: 20, located at CDR1 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 8, located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 21, located at CDR3 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 24, located at CDR1 of the HCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 25, located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
SEQ ID NO: 27, located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

12. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3, comprising peptides with the sequence shown in:
SEQ ID NO: 22, located at CDR1 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 8, located at CDR2 of the LCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 23, located at CDR3 of the LCVR;

SEQ ID NO: 24, located at CDR1 of the HCVR;
SEQ ID NO: 26, located at CDR2 of the HCVR; and
SEQ ID NO: 27, located at CDR3 of the HCVR.

13. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3, wherein the LCVR comprises a peptide with the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 3, 4, 30 or 31.

14. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-3, wherein the HCVR comprises a peptide with the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 12, 13, 32 or 33.

15. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which comprises a heavy chain constant region selected from the group consisting of IgG_1, IgG_2, IgG_3 or IgG_4.

16. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which comprises a kappa or lambda light chain constant region.

17. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which is a Fab fragment.

18. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which is a $F(ab')_2$ fragment.

19. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which is a single chain Fv fragment.

20. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 wherein a CDR has 2 or 1 conservative amino acid substitutions or terminal deletions.

21. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which is chimeric.

22. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-14 which is humanized.

23. The antibody of any one of Claims 1-22 which is labeled.

24. The antibody of Claim 23, wherein the label is selected from the group consisting of:

(a) an enzyme label;

(b) a radioisotope;

(c) a fluorescent label; and

(d) biotin.

25. An isolated nucleic acid molecule that encodes an antibody of any one of Claims 1-14.

26. An expression vector comprising the nucleic acid molecule of Claim 25.

27. A host cell comprising the vector of Claim 26.

28. A method of synthesizing an anti-hGhrelin monoclonal antibody comprising culturing a host cell of Claim 27 such that an anti-hGhrelin monoclonal antibody is expressed in the cell and purifying the antibody from the cell or from the culture media in which said cell is grown.

29. A process of generating an anti-hGhrelin monoclonal antibody comprising,.

a) immunizing a non-human animal with a peptide comprising 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 or 17 contiguous amino acids of a peptide spanning amino acid residues 4-20 of human ghrelin in which 1, 2 or 3 of said contiguous amino acids are selected from amino acids 4, 5 and 6 of human ghrelin, and

b) isolating an antibody from the immunized animal which antibody specifically binds a peptide spanning amino acids 4-20 of both acylated hGhrelin and des-acyl hGhrelin.

30. A monoclonal antibody made by the process of Claim 29.

31. A chimeric antibody comprising the CDRs of an antibody of Claim 30.

32. A humanized antibody comprising the CDRs of an antibody of Claim 20.

33. A pharmaceutical composition comprising the antibody of any one of Claims 1-24, 30, 31 and 32.

34. The pharmaceutical composition of Claim 33 further comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

35. The pharmaceutical composition of Claim 33 or Claim 34 wherein the antibody is the active ingredient.

36. A method of detecting the acylated and/or the des-acyl form human ghrelin in a biological sample comprising contacting the biological sample with the antibody of any one of Claims 1-3 and detecting the human ghrelin protein in the biological sample.

37. A method of treating or preventing obesity or a related disorder comprising administering to a human in need thereof a therapeutically effective amount of the pharmaceutical composition of any one of Claims 33-35.

38. The method of Claim 37 wherein the disorder is selected from the group consisting of obesity, NIDDM, Prader-Willi syndrome, eating disorders, hyperphagia, impaired satiety, anxiety, gastric motility disorders, cancer and cardiovascular disorders.

39. An article of manufacture comprising a packaging material and an antibody contained within said packaging material, wherein the antibody neutralizes ghrelin activity for treatment or prevention of a human suffering from a disorder in which ghrelin activity is detrimental, and wherein the packaging material comprises a package insert which indicates that the antibody neutralizes by binding human ghrelin.

40. The article of manufacture of Claim 39, wherein the antibody is the antibody of any one of Claims 1-24

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